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(54) METHOD FOR EXECUTING A PROGRAM AND SYSTEM THEREFOR.

(57) In a system wherein a program on an external memory medium (1) is loaded into a memory (3) and then a processing unit (4) executes a desired process according to the loaded program, a method for executing a program and a system therefor which prevent a miscopied program from being executed. A code in addition to the program is stored in the external memory medium (1) and the code is read out when loaded in to the memory (3) and compared with a special code preset for the system to judge whether or not the program can be executed.

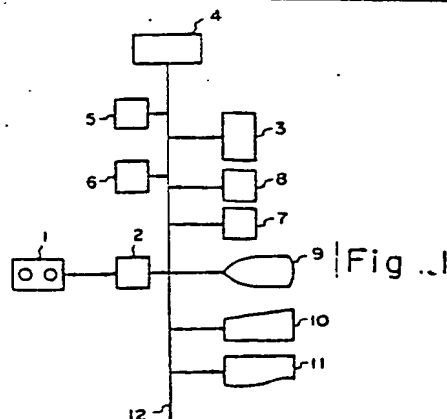


Fig. 1

TITLE MODIFIEDSPECIFICATION

see front page

METHOD OF AND SYSTEM FOR EXECUTING PROGRAMS

Field of Art

5 The present invention relates to a method of
executing a program capable of preventing the program from
being executed when the program loaded from an external
storage medium is one which has been copied unjustly, as well
as a system for carrying out the method. More particularly,
the invention is concerned with a method of and system for
10 executing a program suitable for use in a data forming
apparatus for numerical control.

Background Art

In general, an NC (numerical control) machine tool
is a machine which operates in accordance with instructions
15 programmed beforehand to machine a workpiece into a desired
shape. More specifically, an NC tape is formed by punching
a tape in accordance with predetermined rules using various
numerical information such as numerical values shown in the
drawings of the product to be obtained, as well as various
20 numerical information concerning the machining conditions
such as feed speed. The machining of the workpiece is
conducted by reading various instructions from the NC tape
loaded in the NC apparatus and then executing the instructions.
The preparation of the NC tape, which is usually made by punching
25 requires considerable experience and time. To obviate this
problem, recently, such an automatic NC tape making apparatus
has been developed as adapted to automatically form the tape
in accordance with input information. The automatic NC
tape making apparatus incorporates various devices such as

permits a prompt and correct preparation of the NC tape advantageously. The automatic NC tape making apparatus has a computer incorporating a memory which stores the software, i.e. the program, for making the NC tape.

5 Different types of software are used for different forms of the machining to be performed, e.g. turning, 2 1/2-dimensional milling, 3-dimensional milling, punching, wire-cut electrospark machining and so forth. An impractically large storage capacity of the memory will be required and, hence, the cost of the NC tape making apparatus will be raised undesirably, if the memory has to store the software for all forms of machining. From the standpoint of the user, only few users require such a large capacity memory as to store all kinds of software. The manufacturers of the automatic NC tape making apparatus, therefore, prepare different magnetic tape cassettes for storing software for different kinds of machining and furnish some of these cassettes in compliance with the user's request. Namely, the user can purchase only the magnetic tape cassette storing the software in which he is interested. The user then loads the magnetic tape cassette in the automatic NC tape making apparatus to transfer the software from the magnetic tape cassette to the memory incorporated in the automatic NC tape making apparatus thereby to store the same in the memory. It is thus possible to form NC tapes such as an NC tape for turning, milling and so forth.

 This magnetic tape cassette has a wide applicability and can be copied without substantial difficulty. Therefore, the manufacturer of the automatic NC tape making apparatus, who has made a heavy investment in developing

the software, will be seriously damaged if the user who has purchased the magnetic tape cassette makes copies of the software and sells them unjustly or other users themselves make copies of the software to save the money for purchasing the magnetic tape cassette which is generally expensive. The manufacturer, therefore, is enforced to take suitable countermeasures for unjust copying of the software (program) or unauthorized use of the copy of the program.

10 Accordingly, an object of the invention is to provide a program executing method and a program executing system capable of prohibiting the use of the software stored in a storage medium such as a magnetic tape cassette produced through unjust copying.

15 Another object of the invention is to provide a program executing method and a program executing system in which an external storage medium annexed to an apparatus making use of a program is applicable only to this apparatus, while the storage medium or another storage medium which is
20 a copy of the first-mentioned storage medium cannot be used in another apparatus.

 Still another object of the invention is to provide a program executing method and a program executing system in which, when an external storage medium is used for the
25 first time in an apparatus, the external storage medium becomes usable only in this apparatus.

Disclosure of the Invention

 According to the program executing method and system of the invention, an external storage medium for storing
30 the program stores also predetermined code data. When

the external storage medium is loaded in an apparatus to store the program in the memory incorporated by the apparatus, the code data carried by the external storage medium is compared with the peculiar code set in the apparatus, and a judgement is made as to whether the loaded program is executable by the apparatus, in accordance with the result of the comparison. The program having any code not conforming to the code peculiar to the apparatus cannot be executed by this apparatus and, therefore, the unjust copying of the program becomes meaningless. A protection of the program is thus attained.

According to the method and system of the invention, when the code data stored in the storage medium is a virgin code, the code data is forcibly rewritten into the code peculiar to an apparatus, when the storage medium is used for the first time in this apparatus. As a result, the storage medium becomes usable only in this apparatus exclusively, so that any wrongful use of the storage medium in another apparatus, as well as application of the copies to another apparatus, is prohibited effectively. This protective function is imparted by the apparatus itself.

Brief Description of the Drawings

Fig. 1 is a block diagram of an automatic NC tape making apparatus in accordance with the invention;

Fig. 2 shows the concept of the content of the MT employed by the method and system of the invention; and

Fig. 3 is a flow chart for explaining an embodiment of the invention.

The Best Mode for Carrying Out the Invention

Fig. 1 is a block diagram of an automatic NC tape

making apparatus for carrying out the present invention. A reference numeral 1 designates a magnetic tape cassette (referred to as " MT " , hereinafter) storing a program for making an NC tape. AS shown in Fig. 2, the MT 1 has a plurality of recording regions: namely, a loader recording region 1a, main recording region 1b and a code recording region 1c which are disposed from the head to the tail in the mentioned order. The loader recording region 1a stores a loading program, while the main recording region 1b stores a program, necessary for making the NC tape. The code recording region 1c stores a code peculiar to the automatic NC tape making apparatus which makes use of this MT or, alternatively, a generic code such as all " 0 ". A reference numeral 2 designates a reading/writing device adapted to be detachably loaded with the MT 1 to read information from MT 1 or to write the above-mentioned peculiar code in the MT 1. A reference numeral 3 designates a semiconductor memory composed of a random access memory (RAM) and adapted to store information such as NC tape making program read by reading/writing device from the MT 1, result of computation, input data and so forth. A reference numeral 4 designates a processing device such as a microprocessor, 5 denotes a read-only memory (ROM) for storing the control program and 6 denotes a code setting device constituted by, for example, a nonvolatile memory, code setting switch or the like and adapted to set or store the code peculiar to the NC tape making apparatus. This peculiar code may be stored beforehand in a predetermined address in the ROM 5. A reference numeral 7 denotes a tape puncher, 8 denotes a

paper tape reader, 9 denotes a graphic display, 10 denotes a key board for inputting numerical data and commands, and 11 denotes a printer. A data bus is designated at a reference numeral 12.

5 An explanation will be made hereinunder as to how an NC tape is made by means of a virgin MT purchased from the manufacturer, with specific reference to Fig. 3.

 The code recording region 1c of the MT has, for example, 8 (eight) bits. A generic code consisting of
10 bits b_0 to b_7 each bearing "0" is stored in this MT as a virgin code.

(1) First of all, a start switch (not shown) in the key board 10 of the automatic NC tape making apparatus is pressed. As a result, a bootstrap signal (a starting signal) is
15 delivered to the processing device 4 through the data bus 12. Subsequently, the loader (loading program) written in the loader recording region 1a is read by the reading/writing device 2 in accordance with the bootstrap signal, and is stored in the semiconductor memory 3 through the data
20 bus 12. As this loader is executed by the processing device 4, the NC tape making program is read out from the main recording region 1b of the MT 1 and is stored in the semiconductor memory 3. Subsequently, the code stored in the code recording region 1c of the MT 1 is read by the
25 processing device 4.

(2) The processing device 4 then judges the nature of this code.

(3) If this code is the generic code (virgin code), the processing device 4 reads the code peculiar to the automatic
30 NC tape making apparatus from the code setting device 6 and

writes the same in the code recording region 1c of the MT 1. Namely, the generic code which has been initially stored is erased and the specific code stored in the code setting device 6 is written in place of the erased code.

- 5 (4) As the foregoing steps are completed, the processing device 4 is ready for the making of the NC tape in accordance with the NC tape making program now stored in the semiconductor memory 3.

10 AS stated before, the code peculiar to the automatic NC tape making apparatus in which the MT 1 is used for the first time is written in the code recording region 1c of the MT 1. Therefore, the MT 1 is usable only in this apparatus exclusively, for the reasons stated later.

15 An explanation will be made hereinafter as to how the automatic NC tape making apparatus operates when it is loaded with the exclusive MT.

20 As the start switch of the key board 10 is pressed after mounting this exclusive MT on the reading/writing device 2, a step similar to the aforementioned step 1 is taken and then a judgement is made as to whether the code stored in the code recording region 1c of the MT 1 is the generic code or not, as in the step (2) mentioned before.

- 25 (5) If the code thus read out is judged by the processing device 4 as not being the generic code, the peculiar code is read without delay from the code setting device 6 and is compared by the processing device 4 with the code read out from the MT 1.

30 (6) If the code read out from the MT 1 coincides with the peculiar code read out from the code setting device 6, this MT is accepted as the usable tape so that the NC tape is

made using the program stored in this MT.

Assuming that an MT annexed to another automatic NC tape making apparatus or a copy of the same is used in this automatic NC tape making apparatus mentioned above, the MT
5 is not accepted because the code stored in the MT does not coincide with the peculiar code stored in the code setting device 6.

(6') In consequence, a discordance signal is issued to make the automatic NC tape making apparatus inoperative with
10 the program stored in the MT.

According to the embodiment of the invention described hereinbefore, the tape making operation by the automatic NC tape making apparatus is possible only with the MT annexed to the apparatus or a virgin MT (changed into MT annexed to
15 the apparatus once used in the apparatus). It is, therefore, meaningless to make copies of the MT content. For storing the peculiar code in the ROM 5, it is necessary to write a control program including the peculiar code in each of the automatic NC tape making apparatus in the course of the
20 production of the apparatus. Such work is extremely troublesome. To obviate this trouble, it is suggested to prepare, for example, 10 (ten) kinds of ROM tapes or master ROMs and, in the course of production of the automatic NC tape making apparatus, the content of a selected one of 10
25 ROM tapes or 10 master ROMs is written in the ROM 5 (master program memory) in the apparatus. By taking such a measure, the chance of applicability of a copy MT to another apparatus is considerably decreased to achieve the above mentioned purpose.

30 Although a magnetic tape cassette is used as the MT

in the described embodiment, it will be clear to those skilled in the art that the magnetic tape cassette can be substituted by other types of recording medium such as a magnetic bubble memory, floppy disc or the like. Needless to say, the invention is applicable also to any program-controlled apparatus other than the described NC tape making apparatus.

As has been described in detail hereinbefore, according to the invention, the automatic NC tape making apparatus can operate only with the MT which is annexed to the apparatus from the beginning, i.e. from the time of shipment, or a virgin MT (changed into an MT usable exclusively for the apparatus once it is used in the apparatus), and the MT produced by copying the original MT cannot be used in other automatic tape making apparatus. The copying of the MT, therefore, is quite meaningless and useless, so that the unjust use of the developed software is effectively prohibited. The production of the MTs by the manufacturer can be made easily because it suffices only to store the generic code in the MTs. This can be made simply by making duplicates of the MTs, without requiring the manufacture of independent MTs in large quantity.

Industrial Applicability

According to the invention, it is possible to invalidate the unjust copying of the program and, hence, to protect the program, in such a system that various application forms are prepared in the form of contents of external storage media in order to make the apparatus including a processing unit execute various kinds of processing to permit the user to select and purchase only

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the external storage medium storing the program necessary
for executing the desired processing.

What is Claimed is:

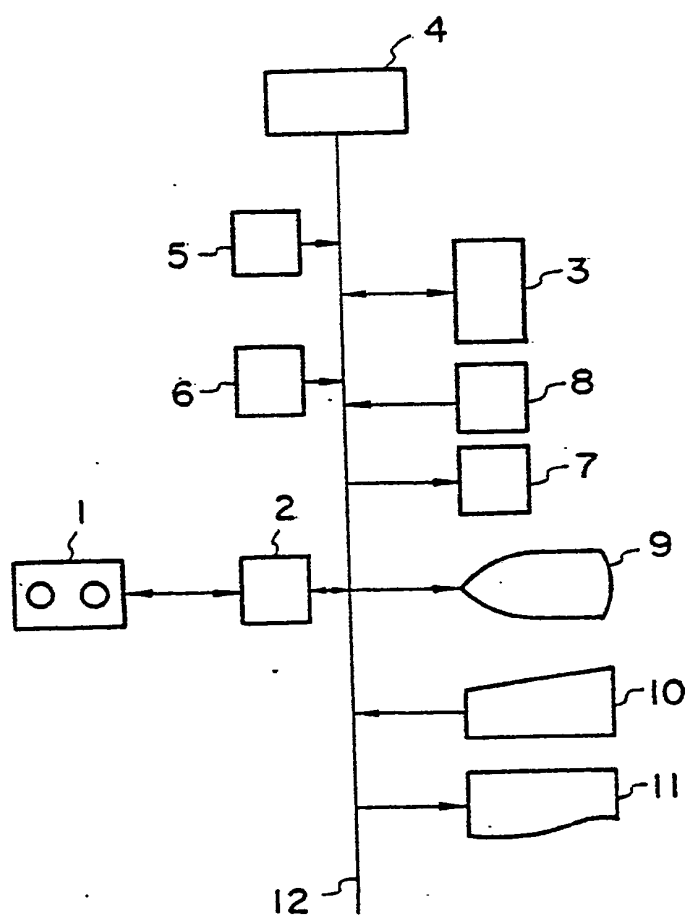
1. A method of executing a program in which a program is read out from a storage medium detachably mounted on an apparatus and stored in an internal memory of the apparatus, and in which a processing unit incorporated in the apparatus executes predetermined processing in accordance with program data stored in said internal memory, an improvement which comprises the steps of reading program data in said storage medium and code data; storing the read out program data and said code data in said internal memory; comparing, by said processing unit, said code data stored in said memory with said code data peculiar to said apparatus set in said apparatus and judging, through the comparison, whether said program data stored in said memory is executable by said apparatus.
2. A method of executing a program according to claim 1, characterized by further comprising the steps of: discriminating, after the step of storing, whether said code data is a virgin code, and, when this code is discriminated as being a virgin code, rewriting said code data in said storage medium into said peculiar code data set in said apparatus.
3. A method of executing a program according to claim 2, wherein said step of judging is conducted when said stored code data is not virgin code data.
4. A method of executing a program according to claim 1, wherein said program data is a program for converting the input data into data for numerical control machining.
5. A system for executing a program comprising: a storage medium adapted to be detachably mounted on an

apparatus and storing both program data and code data; means
for reading data from said storage medium; means for setting
a peculiar code; and a processing unit connected to the
reading means and the setting means and adapted to perform
5 processing in accordance with a control program; said
processing unit being adapted to compare said code data read
from said storage medium and stored in said memory with said
peculiar code and to judge, through the comparison, whether
said program data read from said storage medium and stored
10 in said memory can be executed by said apparatus.

6. A system for executing a program according to claim
5, wherein the reading means has a function to write data in
said storage medium, and wherein said processing unit is
adapted to judge whether the code data read from said
15 storage medium and stored in said memory is a virgin code
and, if said code is judged to be a virgin code, to make
said reading means rewrite said code data in said storage
medium into a peculiar code set by the setting means.

7. A system for executing a program according to claim
20 5, characterized by further comprising inputting means for
inputting numerical data, and characterized in that said
processing unit is adapted to convert the numerical data
input by said inputting data into numerical control machining
data in accordance with said program data stored in said
25 storage medium.

Fig. 1



2
Fig. 2

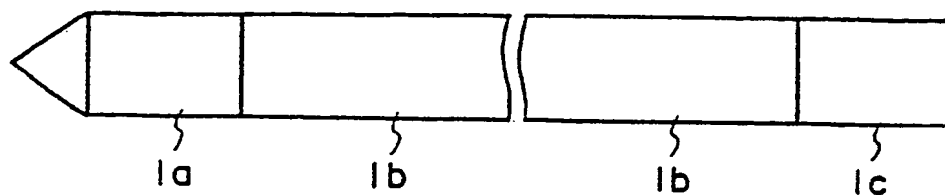
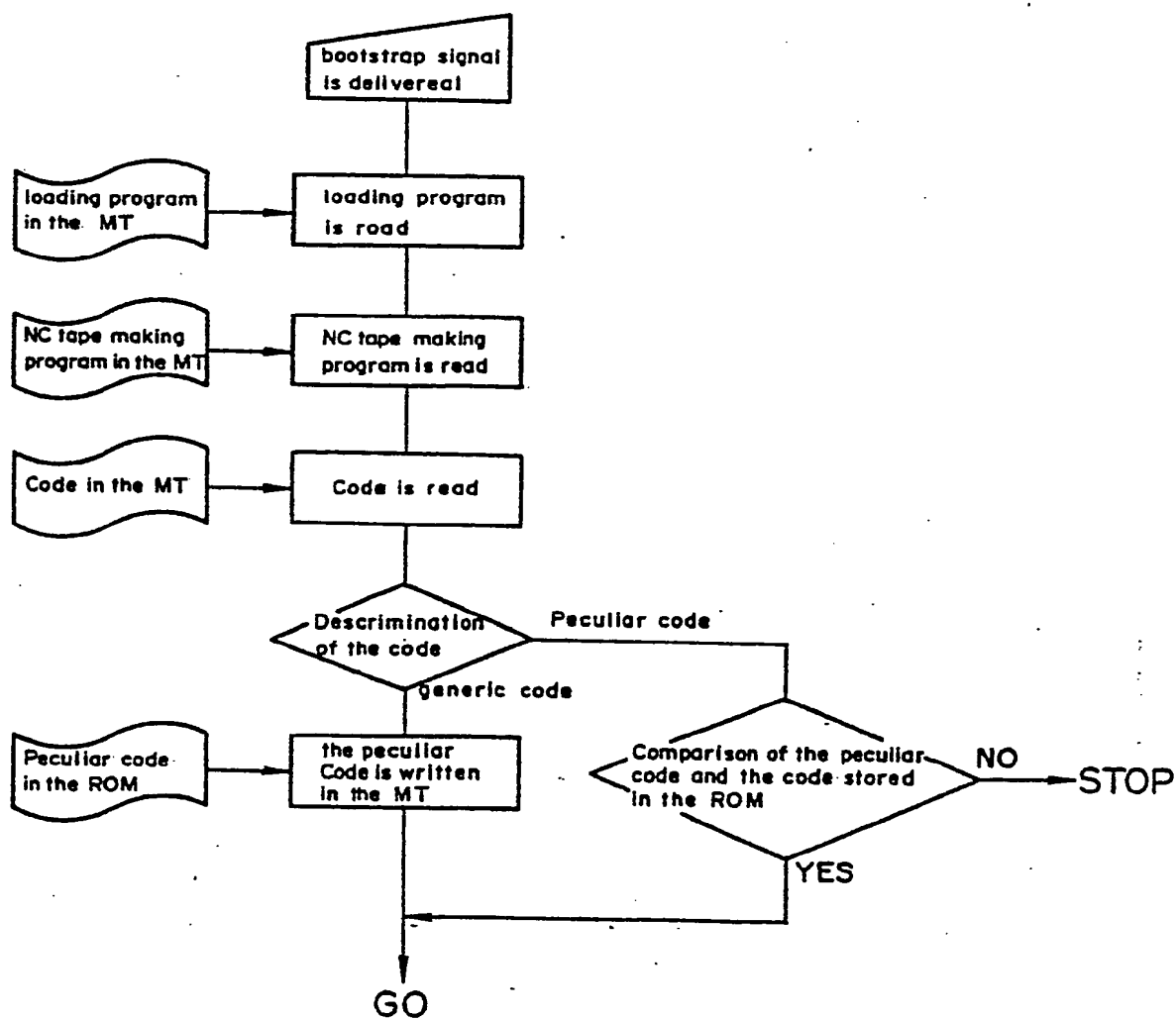


Fig. 3



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

0067875

International Application No PCT/JP 81/00343

I. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER (If several classification symbols apply, indicate all) ³
According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both National Classification and IPCInt Cl³ G05B19/405

II. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum Documentation Searched ⁴

Classification System

Classification Symbols

Int Cl³ G05B15/00, G05B19/00
G06F 9/06Documentation Searched other than Minimum Documentation
to the Extent that such Documents are Included in the Fields Searched ⁴Jitsuyo Shinan Koho 1926 - 1981
Kokai Jitsuyo Shinan Koho 1971 - 1981III. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT ¹⁴Category * Citation of Document, ¹⁵ with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages ¹⁷ Relevant to Claim No. ¹⁸

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|---|--|--|
| Y | JP, A, 51-62280 (Osumi Tekkosho Kabushiki Kaisha.)

1976-5-29, Page 2, lower left column to page 3, lower portion | |
| Y | JP, A, 49-100478 (Nippon Electric Co., Ltd.)

1974-9-24, Page 3 upper portion

"Y" Document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art. | |

* Special categories of cited documents: ¹⁶

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"T" later document published on or after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application, but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

"X" document of particular relevance

IV. CERTIFICATION

Date of the Actual Completion of the International Search ¹

December 7, 1981 (07. 12. 81)

Date of Mailing of this International Search Report ²

December 21, 1981 (21.12.81)

International Searching Authority ¹

Japanese Patent Office

Signature of Authorized Officer ¹⁰